
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	2017 N Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2011	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-034		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition
			Subdivision

The applicant, architect David Shove-Brown for owner Will Lansing, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a three-story rear addition and a roof access stair on the rear of a three-story contributing rowhouse in Dupont Circle. The additions are being undertaken as part of a conversion of the house to a two-unit building.

Property History and Description

2017 N Street, NW is one in a terrace of nine coordinated Victorian rowhouses. The row sits high on a natural berm, and features slate mansard roofs with dormer windows, dark red brick facades with corbelling and stone detailing, and one-story brick projections; the houses at the center and west end of the row have full-height projections with turreted roofs. The row was constructed in 1877 by builder R. Lamson at an estimated cost of \$2,500 for each house. It is quite similar in design and detailing to a row of eight houses at 900-906 T Street and 1902-1910 9th Street, NW, which was likely constructed by the same builder.

Stylistically, this row is illustrative of builder-designed rowhouses of the 1870s that mixed Italianate, Second Empire and Ruskinian Gothic elements. It is one of the most unified and distinctive rows in the historic district from this early period of construction when the Dupont Circle area was first being developed.

Proposal

The proposal calls for removing a *circa* 1960s one-story rear addition and constructing a three-story addition that would be clad in brick, with a contemporary pattern of fenestration. The addition would extend approximately the same dimension as the existing one story addition -- the existing footprint is 55'6" deep; the expanded footprint would be 53'9", with a portion of the rear wall projecting to 55'6". The upper two stories would be increased from a depth of 30'6" to 53'9"-55'6".

The front (southern) edge of the roof deck would be located approximately 13'7" from the street façade and pulled 4'0" off the back wall of the addition.

The project will also include new windows and doors, which have not yet been specified.

Evaluation

The Board has traditionally shown flexibility in allowing a variety of alterations and additions to take place on rear elevations of row buildings, as they rarely affect significant character-defining features. In this instance, while it is still somewhat discernible that the row of houses was built

as a coordinated unit, the rear elevations are utilitarian in character and have been widely adapted and changed over time. The row has several additions approved by the Board over the years in a variety of contemporary and traditional expressions, as well as additions that long pre-date the creation of the historic district. The historic character of the alley is also quite compromised by the looming presence of 90' tall non-contributing buildings fronting on New Hampshire Avenue.

The proposed addition would be subordinate to the existing house in size and mass, and would be equivalent in height. The proposed brick cladding is compatible with the original and predominant material found in this row, while the fenestration would be more obviously contemporary in providing larger windows than were found on rear elevations historically. The uncovered, open stair proposed to extend from the second floor to the rear yard is an element that has been approved in numerous other projects that have involved additions and rear decks.

In order to evaluate the roof deck, the HPO, together with representatives of the Dupont Circle Conservancy, ANC 2-B, and neighbors, met with the owner and the project architect to view a mock up on November 22nd. The deck and stair were not visible from any vantage point in front of the property along N Street or New Hampshire Avenue, which has traditionally been the Board's primary concern. The stair and top floor of the addition were visible in the rear, down an alley and across the backs of other houses from 21st Street. However, while the stair enclosure would project above the existing roofline, it would not tower over the row incompatibly. Its height would be within the range of heights of the existing chimneys and its brick cladding would relate to the surrounding buildings and chimney extensions.

As the project continues to be developed, the applicant should be encouraged to:

- 1) Continue developing the scope of rehabilitation and restoration work on the house, including specifications for window and door replacements, dormer reconstruction, repointing, and roof work;
- 2) Develop a mechanical plan that ensures that any mechanical equipment and other roof appurtenances are located outside of public view (as seen from the front of the property);
- 3) Develop a plan for the enclosing the rear parking space from the alley with a gate, fence or wall, and;
- 4) Continue to coordinate the design development plans for the addition with the HPO.

The staff recommends that the Review Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.